

REMARKS

By this amendment, applicants have amended the claims to more clearly define their invention and have added dependent claims 16 - 35 to define further aspects of the present invention. The added claims are supported by applicants disclosure, e.g., page 24, line 4 to page 25, line 1 and page 18, lines 13 - 15 of applicants' specification.

Applicants, through their undersigned attorney, thank the Examiner for the personal interview conducted on July 7, 2004. Present at the interview were the Examiner, Thomas Brahan, Mr. Masaki Fujita of Hitachi, Ltd. and the undersigned. During the interview, the present invention was discussed as were the foregoing amended and added claims. The Examiner was also advised that an information disclosure statement was being filed on July 7, 2004 submitting, for the Examiner's consideration, a copy of European Patent No. EP 0 644 575. It is noted that the date of publication of the application for this patent is March 22, 1995.

During the interview, the contents of EP 0 644 575 were discussed. The Examiner's attention was especially directed to Figures 1 and 2 of this patent and accompanying description. It was noted that the disclosure in paragraph 0032 of this document indicated that the wafer cassettes 12 installed in the loader 2 include cassettes 12a, 12b for product wafers and a dummy cassette 12c. The cassettes 12 are provided with wafer search mechanisms 121 (A, B, C) 122 (A, B, C) and when the cassettes 12 are set, the wafer search mechanisms 121 recognize specimens therein, respectively. It was noted, however, that this document contains no disclosure of any dummy samples in dummy cassette 12c and does not disclose a method for using a dummy sample or a vacuum processing apparatus including a controller for controlling use of a dummy sample.

It was agreed that the preliminary amendment would be filed and that the application would be examined.

Entry of this preliminary amendment and favorable consideration of the subject application are requested.

To the extent necessary, applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to the deposit account of Antonelli, Terry, Stout & Kraus, LLP, Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case: 520.34692V17), and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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